

The Tale of the Muted Girl

Rachael Samuels

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Once upon a time in a land not so far from here lived a young girl, Jane, and her parents. One day Jane went out with her father to the market when she heard a blood curdling scream coming from one of the buildings surrounding them. She pulled away from her father's grasp and crept through the crowd that had begun to form around the body of the woman. Jane let out a terrifying scream. She was gazing down at the mangled body of her mother! Her father had been searching for her. He came running and immediately grabbed her, spinning her around. He held her close to him as she cried into his shoulder. He wept silently.

In the days that followed everyone worried about Jane. She sat in her room and rocked back and forth, unwilling to see any visitors. She cried all the time and occasionally would glance out of the window into the yard where the other small children played. She wouldn't eat, wouldn't talk, but everyone agreed on one thing. She was as beautiful as her mother was.

Years passed this way. Day in the young girl would sit staring off into space. Day out her father would run in with a cold towel after an all too vivid nightmare. Finally everyone decided that maybe what the young girl needed was a mother figure. Her father, who hadn't even considered dating another woman after his wife was killed, met and married another woman. Some would say it was just to fill the void in the house and not for any real love. Jane never really liked her stepmother. Every time she would see her she would stare and at night she would wake up screaming MURDER!

The stepmother had enough of this after a few months and decided that Jane needed to be sent away.

"My dear wife. I love you, but there is no way that I can send away my only child because it is inconveniencing you."

"My love. I see what this does to you as well. I'm not merely asking you to send her away for me. I would never think of doing such a thing, but she's wearing you out and eventually she will hurt herself."

Frank was troubled by his new bride's words but obeyed. The next morning he drove his station wagon to the mental institution on the edge of town. Jane didn't look at her father the entire trip. She simply sat rocking back and forth and staring into space. Her father wiped away a tear from his cheek as he glanced at his daughter.

He drove home unable to check her in. The stepmother flew into a rage when she found out.

“What do you mean you couldn’t do it?”

“She is my daughter, you are my wife. You are not her mother. I know that her mother would want Jane here so that we can look after her.”

“My dear sweet darling, I see what is going on here. She’s manipulating you to go against me. I knew from the first day that I met the girl that she didn’t like me. Now she has proven it.”

She begins to cry. The father reaches his arm around her and pats her shoulder.

“There, there my sweet. I’m sure she likes you. She has been through so much trauma...maybe you are right. I’ll take her tomorrow.”

The stepmother, satisfied, lay down and fell asleep. In the middle of the night Jane again, screamed MURDER and her father came running. His heart wept for the young girl he raised. The next morning he woke Jane up and got her dressed.

She again, sat in the car, rocking back and forth. Her beautiful face was so pale and pure. Her father’s heart again, leapt out of his chest and he turned the station wagon around. This time the stepmother could only glare at her husband.

“Why NOT?” She screamed startling him. “Do you not love me?”

“Darling please keep your voice down! She is my daughter, you are my wife. I love you both very much.”

“Obviously you don’t since you don’t have enough guts to stand up to her manipulative ways.”

“I resent that comment. She’s so young and beautiful. Her life was ripped away from her. I just want to make her happy.”

“That’s all that I want for her too. I’ll tell you what. Tomorrow we’ll both go. It should be something that we do as a family anyway. That way we’ll be sure to get her proper care.”

The father, weakened by the loveliness of Serena, agreed. That night Jane again screamed MURDER in her dreams and her father came running. He held her until she fell back asleep. The next morning the stepmother awoke Jane and thought for the briefest second that Jane spoke.

“Murderer.” She had whispered, almost too faint to hear.

They began their drive to the mental institution. The stepmother was in very high spirits while the

father was noticeably upset. After a long time or a short time Jane fell asleep.

Suddenly the girl screamed MURDER!!! Her father so startled by this outburst jerked the wheel too hard to the right, tossing the station wagon down into a ravine. When the car finally stopped rolling the stepmother opened her eyes and pulled herself out of the car. She ran away without ever trying to help. Jane woke up during the ordeal and started trying to pull her father out of the wreckage. The man was obviously near death.

With his final words he whispered to her, “My darling daughter. Run to save your life. Run free but never forget who you are.”

She went around to the other side where her stepmother once was. She was shocked to find her gone. Jane ran, screaming for help as she went.

A long time passed and the stepmother had almost forgotten Jane. She buried the father by the septic tank and continued on with her life and his money of course! A huge disfiguring scar ran the full length of her cheek and because of it she never went out during the day. Now she wanted the young girl dead more than ever.

Every day she would glance into her magic fountain in the garden and ask if she was beautiful and every day it would show her reflection without the scar. Then it would show her a picture of Jane who was even more beautiful still. The stepmother would fly into a rage and scream.

“I’ll fix this,” she snarled.

Meanwhile...

Jane ran until her legs could carry her no farther. She came across a small motel and knocked on the door. An elderly man answered and she explained to him all about the accident. He told her he would call the police and that she could stay the night for free. She thanked him, took the key and opened the door to her room. In the middle of the night the motel owner’s son heard her screams and ran to her door. He ran to her side and awoke her. The girl was disoriented and startled by the stranger. She gazed at him for awhile and he at her until a lightning crash awakened them both.

“You were screaming, I-I came to help. I should go.” He said turning towards the door. She reached out and grabbed his arm. He sat down again and looked at the floor. “I knew your father. He

was a good man.”

Jane, who was not so young anymore, glanced at the young man and began to cry. He pulled out a handkerchief and dabbed at her tears.

“There, there my love. By the way my name is John.”

This continued on for two more nights. Finally Jane decided that she had to face her fear of her stepmother and go to her. It was the only way to stop the dreams. So she started on her journey back. The mysterious motel owner’s son came with her.

When they arrived at her childhood home all the lights were off except one which shone through the open window. Jane peaked inside and gasped at what she saw. Her stepmother was casting some sort of spell and the room was filling with what appeared to be blood. Suddenly she turned toward the window and caught sight of Jane before she had time to flee. She ran out into the courtyard and called innocently for the girl to come. As if under a spell, Jane came diligently to her side. The stepmother smiled to her and handed her a piece of bread.

“I have missed you,” she said. “Please won’t you give this to your friend and come inside?”

The young girl hadn’t eaten in days and ran to find the motel owner’s son. She split the piece of bread in half and gulped down her half. Immediately she began to choke and try as the motel owner’s son may he couldn’t get it to dislodge. The other half of the bread lay forgotten on the ground as the rain covered it with mud. The stepmother having seen this cursed quietly. The spell wouldn’t work unless she ate the entire thing!

John laid Jane on the ground and quickly began to give her the Heimlich maneuver. The stepmother cackled from inside the house.

“Eating too fast has its hazards my dear,” she said.

“Come on.” John said, raining gently falling down his face. “Please breathe. I love you.”

At these words Jane’s eyes opened and the piece of bread continued on its way to her stomach. She smiled at him, then turned her attention back to the house. She caught her stepmother off guard and tackled her to the ground.

“Goodness child. Aren’t you feisty? So was your mother!”

Suddenly lightening flashed and all of the lights went out. It was hard to see but one could still make out the figures in the dark.

“You killed my mother! You are a MURDERER!” Jane screamed and lunged for her. She again tackled the stepmother, but she was able to wriggle herself free. They fought inside, toppling tables and chairs. Knocking over knick-knacks and dishes. They fought outside and finally with a final blow to the face Jane sent the stepmother flying into her own fountain. A crack of lightning illuminated the sky and electrocuted the stepmother. Jane ran back inside to find John’s open arms.

“Lucky for you, wearing rubber soles,” he added, smiling.

“I love you.” She said, kissing him. Then in that old house where she had spent so many years dealing with her past, Jane began to make plans for her future.

I was at their wedding but I’m a recovering alcoholic so I didn’t drink any mead. I’m a woman so it didn’t go into my mustached but the grape juice really stained my dress.

